

CENTRALIA, TOWN OF BEAUTIFUL CHURCHES

BATTLE IN '64 FOUGHT CLOSE TO CENTRALIA

M. S. Bush Tells of Fight Between Johnson's Troops and Anderson's Rebels on Singleton Farm.

FEW UNIONISTS ESCAPED

The Famous Frank James Was in Encounter—Returned to Visit Spot Many Years Later.

When eighty men, dressed in blue, the Federal color, approached Centralia about ten o'clock on the morning of September 27, 1864, the citizens of the town thought them Union soldiers, and discovered, only when they arrived in town, that they were Southern guerrillas. Even then they did not realize for what purpose the troops had come, until they saw the train fired upon, men killed without hesitation and stores and houses plundered.

Although the massacre at Centralia was one of the most bloody parts of the Civil war few people here understand its importance or know much about it. Centralia had at the time two hotels, two stores, a school and a depot. There were four two-story buildings in the town, one of which was the predecessor of the New Globe Hotel. The depot was the only other large building, and had been newly built.

First the troops entered the stores and houses, taking everything that they could find, whether or not it would be of use to them. Even bolts of goods and baby shoes were included in their plunder. In the station they found a keg of whiskey and a box of rubber boots. After drinking all the liquor they wanted, they carried the rest in the boots to their comrades in camp.



M. S. Bush, one of the oldest residents, who told the story of the Bill Anderson massacre.

Some of the guerrillas then remembered the stage which ran between Columbia and Centralia. They met it just as it was coming into town, stopped it and robbed the passengers. In the stage were five Columbians: J. S. Rollins, J. H. Waugh, J. M. Samuel, Henry Keene and

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Boyle Gordon. They were going to a Union meeting at Mexico. The soldiers asked their names but were answered with fictitious ones. Before the passengers could be searched, the St. Louis train arrived and took the attention of the guerrillas.

Logs and railroad ties were thrown in front of the train to stop it and shots were fired through the coaches. The passengers, numbering about 150, were robbed, and the express and baggage cars were looted. On the train were twenty-three Union soldiers, some of whom were wounded. The rebels confiscated all of their clothes that they wanted and then lined them up outside to be shot. Most of the Federals were unarmed, and not a shot was fired by any of them during this time. Only one escaped death, a sergeant whom they wished to trade for a prisoner. Most of the Union soldiers died immediately, but those who were wounded and tried to hide were dragged out from their shelter and shot down.

The train was then set fire to and the engines were ordered to start it down the track and then jump off. He did this, but so fixed the engine that it ran only about two and a half miles and stopped. The four coaches burned. The rebels returned to their camp near Singleton's farm.

MAJOR JOHNSON DEFEATED
Major A. V. E. Johnson with 150 Union soldiers had been ordered to pursue and engage in fight these guerrillas. The residents of Centralia tried to dissuade him, but he followed the guerrillas to camp and was there defeated by them on account of his small number of men, poor weapons and slow horses. No quarter was given or received and of the 120 Federal soldiers that fought, 108 fell dead on the field.

Johnson was defeated and after this skirmish the guerrillas returned to Centralia where they even killed unarmed civilians.

R. B. Price who went to Centralia from Columbia a few days after the massacre, said of it, "it was certainly a bloody affair, one of the worst of the war."

Dean Walter Williams went over the scene of the massacre and has since written a history of the affair, as did Col. L. M. Switzer, then editor of the Missouri Statesman. The Statesman for Friday, September 30, three days after the massacre, begins with the following description of it:

CALLS THEM MURDERERS
"The notorious murderer and robber, Bill Anderson, after making an ineffectual attack on Fayette on Saturday, crossed the north Missouri Railroad above Sturgeon, and turning, came into Boone, east of Centralia. On Tuesday morning last, Anderson and his murderous crew entered

mainly of recruits from Andrian County, were in Centralia in the early fall of 1864, when they heard that some of the Confederate forces were near by. We begged Johnson not to go out of the town and told him that the soldiers he was going to meet were the redoubtable Anderson men, but he was stubborn. He didn't believe that it was this company of course, or he wouldn't have gone. It was said of the Anderson men that they rode with a pistol in each hand, and that firing from beneath their horses' necks, they could hit a pint cup fastened on a tree that was a block away. I never did believe these tales though. However that

four Confederates, the total casualty for that side. Frank James told me out of his own mouth that their men never fired until they saw the whites of the eyes. With a pistol in one hand, the bridle rein in the other, they rode with their heads laid flat on their horses' necks. The rebels yelled like Comanche Indians. James said, "We hypnotized them; so they couldn't fire and then we shot 'em down," was the way he told it to me. Well, they chased the men that were left to about a quarter of a mile from Sturgeon, at least, eleven miles from where the fight started, and only fourteen men out of that band of more than 100 escaped. The histories say that 200 were killed, but it couldn't have been more than 90. The last man to be shot was a farmer named Marquette, and James got him. He said he hated to

may be, Johnson and the federal troops rode out to the Singleton farm, near which the rebels were encamped. The story of the fight that followed came to me partly from old Harvey Silver, who watched the encounter from a schoolhouse, and partly from the famous Frank James, who was with the Southern boys.

JOHNSON MAKES BIG MISTAKE
"When the federal troops came riding up, school was dismissed and the children were hurried home. On a flat stretch of ground in the open was an old rail fence. The federal soldiers pulled down every other rail of this fence and stationed men behind it. As the rebels came to the edge of the timber, half a mile away, they dismounted to tighten their saddle girths. And here was where Johnson made his big mistake. 'The fools,' he said, 'they are going to fight on foot.' Accordingly, he made his own dismount and told each fifth man to hold the horses of the others.

"The Confederates remounted. Old Harvey Silver said the rebels' horses went from a trot to a gallop and on a gallop to a dead run. Johnson's men got excited and began firing from such a distance as to have slight effect on their enemy's ranks. Their shots killed

shoot the man, because 'he had the girl' and gave a hard scrap. "The men were buried right where they were killed, but in 1875, the bodies of the Union men were moved to Jefferson City. The four Confederate soldiers that were killed were buried in Pleasant Grove Cemetery near Centralia and their bodies still lie there.

FRANK JAMES RETURNS IN 1896
"It must have been in 1895 or 1896," Mr. Bush said, "when I was mayor of Centralia, that Frank James returned here and told me his side of the story. He came from Columbia where he had been acting as starter at some horse races and I entertained him while he was in Centralia.

We drove out to the old Pleasant Grove Cemetery and other places, taking with us two reporters, Walter Williams, now dean of the School of Journalism, and James Kelly Poole, editor of the Courier and at one time secretary of the building commission for a new capitol at Jefferson City. We tried to keep it quiet, but somehow the people found out who we had with us and about 150 followed us to the cemetery. Among these were the son and grandson of Marquette, whom James had killed in the battle at the Singleton farm. They came up and shook hands with him.

"One of the questions we asked Frank James was, 'After the war was over, why didn't you go home and quit?' His answer was 'They wouldn't let us.' He pointed out to us the mammoth pine under which the Confederate men were buried and said he remembered the encounter as it were yesterday. When he left here, he went to St. Louis, where he lived for some time before his death."

BENEFIT GIVEN
AT CENTRALIA
First Christian Church Missionary Society Has Program Tonight.

The Missionary Society of the First Christian Church of Centralia will give a benefit at the church tonight. The program will consist of a reading by Miss Imogene Curtright, a drill by some girls and a play, "The Old Maids' Club."

The cast of characters in the play is: Miss Lucella Matilda Primrose, president; Mrs. B. R. Curtright, vice-president; Susan Jane Hopewell, treasurer; Marie Jane Hopewell, treasurer; Sallie Brown, secretary Mrs. T. Pat Penie Dora Doolittle; Miss Arlene McCauslin Faith Snowmore; Miss Frances Palmer Julia Jones; Mrs. Charley Riley Maude Hopeworth, Mrs. Emma Garrard Mary Elizabeth Smith; Miss Katherine Naylor Viola Longfellow; Mrs. Artie Green Loretta de Witt; Miss Maude Squires Martha Weinhauler; Mrs. David Hulen Lucy Rosebud; Mrs. Harry Stone Betsy Robinson; Mrs. La Force Young Lady, double of Luella; Miss Imogene Curtright Dora; Miss Helen Austene Tommy Doolittle, assistant treasurer; Virgil Neele Phillip Andrew James, newspaper reporter; Frank Denton.

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Beautiful Churches and Schools
Are the Pride of Centralia
Centralia is located near the center of the richest states of the Union; it has two progressive manufacturing concerns, an efficient co-operative elevator, a first-class high school and grade school; two railroads go through the town; yet none of the things are mentioned with as great pride as the fact that in no other town of the state can be found three as beautiful churches as in Centralia.
The property owned by these three organizations is estimated at approximately \$150,000.
The First Christian Church is a large brick building, valued at \$75,000, and situated one block south of the city square. The building contains a complete Sunday school plant with accommodations for all kinds of modern church work. There are twenty separate classrooms, an auditorium, lecture room, galleries, pastor's study and choir room on the main floor. In the basement is a Sunday school lecture room, a kitchen with dishes and equipment and a dining room. The contract for a new \$3,000 organ has already been made and will be installed before Easter.
The 600 members who belong to this church raise a yearly budget of \$5,000 a year. Its pastor, L. H. Otto, came to the church four months ago from Oklahoma City, Okla. Mr. Otto took the degrees of A. B. and A. M. from the University of Missouri.
In 1867, the First Christian Church or, and Hugo Hagen, H. H. Leutaw is pastor of this church.
The First Baptist Church was built in 1909 at a cost of \$40,000 and today has a membership of 340. It is of red brick and of dignified and impressive style. W. A. Simmons is the present minister of the church.
When a visitor expressed his surprise that the churches of Centralia were so large and beautiful and wondered why the memberships were so large, one of the citizens of the town said: "The people of Centralia have always gone to church and taken a pride in making the church buildings the most beautiful places in the town. Our churches and schools are the things we enjoy most and are most proud of."

Centralia Has "No Man's Land,"
Small Strip Owned by No One
In the central part of the city of Centralia lies a strip of land that belongs to no one. This ground, about ten feet in width, lies between the original town and the later additions, and is referred to by citizens as "No Man's Land."
In the making of the lithographs, all of the blocks were laid out east and west, in line with the park, but through some error this alley was omitted. At this time a great number of lots were sold and the deeds executed. By order of a judicial official in 1883, the proprietor had the lithograph plat of the town corrected and the deed to it recorded in the recorder's office of Boone County. By the amended plat, the ground eliminated was thrown to the southern boundary of the town near the city park.
The land on which the city is located was patented by the United States government for Nathan W. Wilson in 1845, and subsequently conveyed by Wilson to Middleton Singleton, the founder of the town. Theoretical town was laid out in 1857, and the lots were sold at auction. Singleton, who was a graduate of the University of Missouri, named the streets of the new town for certain pioneer citizens and business associates in Boone County and Columbia. In these early times saloon licenses were first fixed at \$100 a year. Later, because the citizens objected, the rate was reduced to \$25.
In 1901 the town authorized the issue of bonds to the sum of \$7,500 to build a city hall. By 1910 the debt incurred was paid off and in that year \$45,000 were used to build a waterworks system. On the issue of bonds for \$20,000, a sewer system was also constructed. An electrical distributing system was acquired in 1915 from the Mexico Power Co. This system was combined with the water and sewer plants. The bonded indebtedness brought about by these improvements is provided for in a sinking fund and is payable in 1930.

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